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## **Federal Change Takes Effect in Use of Benefits Card**

**Lincoln** – Effective Saturday (2/22), a new federal law excludes some businesses where recipients of public assistance can use a benefits card for purchases, according to Thomas Pristow, director of Children and Family Services in the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services.

In February 2012, Congress passed the Middle Class Tax Relief Act that included provisions restricting the use of public benefits cards in certain businesses. The law, which takes effect Feb. 22, states that recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) cannot use the benefits card in:

- Liquor stores;
- Casinos, gambling casinos or gaming establishments; or
- Any retail establishment which provides adult-oriented entertainment (performers who disrobe or perform unclothed).

DHHS has elected to apply this restriction to some other public assistance programs where the U.S. Bank ReliaCard® is used for payments, he said.

DHHS began using the U.S. Bank ReliaCard in July 2012 as a means to provide benefits. Pristow said electronic payments are timelier, and deposits in bank accounts and debit cards are immediate and a more secure way to send funds to clients. The card also gives clients greater accessibility to funds and saves time and money for those who live miles from their bank.

Clients with a U.S. Bank ReliaCard and providers of services received notice of the law change earlier this month, he said.